amendment to the information Technology Act 2000, where a provision for setting up a mandate for critical infrastructure sector such as telecom, transport, banks, power, defence, aviation and railways would be mandated to secure their information technology system and network;

(b) if so, whether any concrete measures in this regard have been discussed; and

(c) if so, by when the Bill for amending the Information Technology Act is likely to be introduced?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A policy on protection of critical infrastructure is in place. The policy is aimed at ensuring compliance by Government and critical sectors and verification through periodic risk assessments and annual audits by third party auditing organizations.

In support of the above security policy, Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has created a panel of 55 IT security auditors to help the organizations to get their IT infrastructure and information systems audited from the point of view of Risk assessment, penetration of network and vulnerability assessment.

(c) A Bill has already been introduced in Lok Sabha on 15.12.2006 to amend the Information Technology Act, 2000 and has been referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee for IT.

Connection of horizontal offices in districts and talukas

3062. SHRI JAYANTILAL BAROT: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under consideration for Non-exchange Line to connect horizontal offices in districts and talukas which can be extended to the villages in future; and

(b) if so, the present status of the proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) and (b) Sir, at present there is no such project under consideration.